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ABSTRACT

Findings of two followup studies of Morning Star (a 2-year Native teacher education program established in 1975 at the Blue Quills Native Education Centre, leading to a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Alberta) are examined in relation to the program's assumptions, organization, and delivery systems. The teacher certification of 37 program participants and the development of public administration, liberal arts, nursing, and secretarial programs (involving 125 students) at the Centre indicate that post-secondary educational opportunities for Natives are increasing and Native attitudes toward higher education are changing positively. The 20 Morning Star students who are now teachers in Native schools have a significant impact serving as role models for Native children. The field center concept eases the transition to university life and facilitates placement of students in Native schools. There is agreement that the cultural component should exist, but it is still in an evolutionary state. Although fewer male students have enrolled in the program, there is no clear explanation for their success rate of less than half of their female counterparts. Although tentative, due to the small number of students involved (99), these findings suggest further concerns for the field of Native teacher education. (NEC)

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MORNING STAR STUDENTS

A

FOLLOW-UP STUDY

MORNING STAR

MORNING STAR NATIVE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

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MORNING STAR STUDENTS

A

FOLLOW-UP STUDY

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Paper Presented at:

The Canadian Indian Teacher
Education Projects Conference

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February 3 & 5, 1981

During the past year and a half two follow-up studies of the first two cycles of the Morning Star Native teacher education program have been conducted. The purposes of this paper are:

(1) to examine the need for such follow-up studies;

(2) to discuss the findings of these two studies in relation to the assumptions made, and the organization and delivery systems employed in the initial planning of this program; and

(3) to examine what implications these findings may have for the systematic study of Native teacher education programs in Canada.

THE NEED FOR SYSTEMATIC EVALUATION OF NATIVE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The past decade and a half has seen the proliferation of numerous Native teacher education programs in Canada. The reasons for these programs being established have varied from one locality to another.

Some national forces such as the 1972 National Indian Brotherhood's policy statement entitled "Indian Control of Indian Education" have lent impetus to the creation of such programs. Likewise more localized forces have played a significant role. Due to these variations, the structure and rationale for the existence of these programs differ markedly. The 1979 "Survey of Native Teacher Education Projects in Canada" (More & Wallis: 1979) articulate these variations.

At this juncture in the development of Native teacher education programs in Canada, there would appear to be a need to look back at the principles upon which these programs were established and the stated rationales for their existence to determine what structures have been and promise to be most functional and what assumptions about the training of Native teachers have and have not been supported.

Granted, few programs started with or presently operate within identical circumstances. However, directions determined from an examination of one program may have implications for others. If generalizations can be made about the organization and delivery of these programs, Native teacher education will have begun to move from a series of ad hoc projects to a legitimate area of academic research. Decisions can then become less emotionally and politically, and more rationally based.

MORNING STAR FOLLOW-UP STUDY: FINDINGS

Increased Post-Secondary Educational Opportunities

When the Morning Star program was established in 1975 it was conceived as a positive step in correcting some of the existing inequities in educational opportunity available to Native students in Alberta. Although the existence

of such inequities need not be documented, the extent of such inequities is noteworthy. First, the most recent census data available in 1975 showed that; of Native youths aged 15 to 24 who no longer attended school 51% had completed less than grade 12 while the corresponding figure for the non-native population was 17%. Second, according to survey data of the students enrolled in high school in Emonton, only 9.8% of Native students even aspired to a post-secondary education while 50% of the non-native students planned to complete university. Third, according to a 1974 Indian Affairs publication only 12 Indian people had ever graduated from any university in Alberta. McIntosh (1979:1) calculated that at this time "Indian teachers were under-represented in Alberta schools by a factor of almost 20:1."

In the first four years of the Morning Star program, some progress was made toward correcting inequities in post-secondary educational opportunities for Natives. During this time a total of 37 students successfully completed the requirements for teacher certification. Although this number is not large in absolute terms, when compared with the number of Native university graduates prior to 1975, (12) the progress might indeed be considered significant. No doubt similar rates of success (56 percent) have been realized in other similar programs across Canada.

Perhaps as importantly, is an apparent changing of attitudes among Native youths toward post-secondary education during this period of time.

Since Morning Star began at the Blue Quills Native Education Centre in 1975 a variety of other post-secondary programs have been started at the Centre. These include a B.S.W. degree program through the University of Calgary, a Bachelor of Public Administration and a Bachelor of Liberal Arts programs through Athabasca University, a registered nurses program through Grant MacEwan College, and a secretarial program through A.V.C. Lac La Biche. Rather than the 33 students who enrolled in the Morning Star program in 1975, approximately 125 post-secondary students now are enrolled in the above programs offered at the Centre.

As well, the number of Native students currently registered at the University of Alberta in Edmonton totals approximately 80 students compared with approximately 25 students in 1975. These data should not be misinterpreted to suggest that the existence of the Morning Star program has been singularly responsible for this apparent change in Native youths' attitudes, toward post-secondary education. Many other forces have been at work in Alberta generally, and in Northeastern Alberta specifically, which have also supported this change.

Despite the progress made, in percentage terms the Native population of Alberta is still grossly underepresented in regard to post-secondary education. Now that initial success has been experienced, it is imperative that the reasons for this success are determined and programs organized accordingly if significant strides are to be taken to correct existing inequities.

Increased Number of Qualified Native Teachers

The thrust of the Morning Star program was not merely to increase educational opportunities, but rather to train Native people to become qualified teachers. Although it was noted above that 37 students qualified for teacher certification during the first four years of Morning Star, not all have become classroom teachers. To date, twenty-four of these have served as a classroom teacher for at least one year. Of these twenty-four, twenty have accepted teaching positions on reserves or metis colonies. Some students have been attending university since completing Morning Star, while others have accepted positions in areas other than education. Interestingly, employment opportunites in areas other than education have been relatively plentiful for graduates of the program.

As was noted in relation to increasing post-secondary educational opportunites, the absolute number of individuals trained through the Morning Star program and who have become teachers is relatively small, however, progress in this regard is significant when compared with the actual

number of Native teachers trained in Alberta prior to 1975. Miracle (1977) suggested this number was approximately 15.

Perhaps the most significant impact of the program will not be realized for some time to come. One of the general purposes of Morning Star has been to train Native teachers who will provide appropriate role models for Native children. The twenty teachers, though small in number, might well be expected to have a significant impact by serving as role models for not only those Native students in their classes but in the entire schools in which they teach. For the twenty teachers who teach on metis colonies or reserves this impact might be expected to be relatively great. Of course the nature of the impact will depend in part on the level of success these teachers experience in these schools.

Recognition of Graduates

One of the original assumptions made regarding the Morning Star program was that the program must be structured so that there would be a "confirmation of excellence" from both the Native and educational communities. Having students enrolled in the initial portion of a B. Ed. program from the University of Alberta has assured that the training of Morning Star students is accepted by the edu-

cational community. Having the native community participate in the policy-making function of the program as an equal partner has, in part, contributed to an acceptance of students by the Native community. This acceptance is reflected in the above noted statistic that 20 of the 24 graduates who have secured teaching positions have taught or are teaching on Indian reserves or metis colonies.

Length of Program

Those who first organized the Morning Star program rejected a four year program in favor of a two year program feeling that potential students would not be willing nor able to take four years of training before re-entering the work force. An act of legislation was passed in order to provide for special certification of students upon successful completion of the two-year program.

Data collected during the two follow-up studies suggest this assumption has not been supported. Of the twenty-one students who completed the first two year program twelve were hired as elementary teachers in northern Alberta, seven continued to work toward a B. Ed. degree and two secured employment in fields other than education. Of the twenty-four who completed the second two-year program fourteen continued with their Univerisity education, seven secured education related positions and three gained employment in fields other than education.

Of the thirty-seven who qualified for certification following completion of the program, 54 percent went directly to University. To date, 70 percent of these thirty-seven students have taken further university training. Eleven or thirty percent have now obtained their B. Ed. degrees from the University of Alberta. Incidentally, two students who did not complete the program transferred to other university programs and have now obtained a bachelor's degree. These data provide support for the recent decision by the Board of Morning Star to extend the cycle three program from two to three years. Clearly, a minority of students preferred to take advantage of the provision for conditional certification. Those who did sacrificed a great deal financially.

Field Center Concept

One of the most common characteristics of successful Native teacher education programs in Canada is the field center concept. Quite simply this means that all or a portion of the program is offered off campus at a location more easily accessible to Native people. Morning Star is located some 130 miles northeast of Edmonton. For the first two cycles of Morning Star both years of the program were offered at the Blue Quills Native Education Centre. Cycle three students will complete two years at the field center and one year on campus in order to qualify for certification.

The field center concept was originally conceived as a means to easing the transition to university life by reducing the number of initial adjustments for students. It has also allowed many students to remain at home while completing a major portion of their teacher preparation program. As well, the field center concept facilitates the placement of students in Native or integrated schools for the practicum portion of the program.

The field center concept was endorsed by students who responded to the cycle two follow-up study. Perceptions were not sought from cycle one students. Since it is difficult to separate the field center concept from the service component provided there, a more detailed explanation of the value of this concept could not be ascertained. This could be a fruitful area for future study.

The location of the field center would appear to be an important consideration. As Figure 1 shows, approximately 2/3 of the students who have enrolled in Morning Star come from the immediate region. Approximately 1/5 came from one adjacent region (Lesser Slave Lake). Interestingly, for each cycle the number of students from the Saddle Lake Athabasca region has become progressively less while the number from the adjacent region progressively more. This may suggest a need for more centers or that over time students will gravitate to a relatively distant field center once a "track record" has been established and when inducements are relatively high.

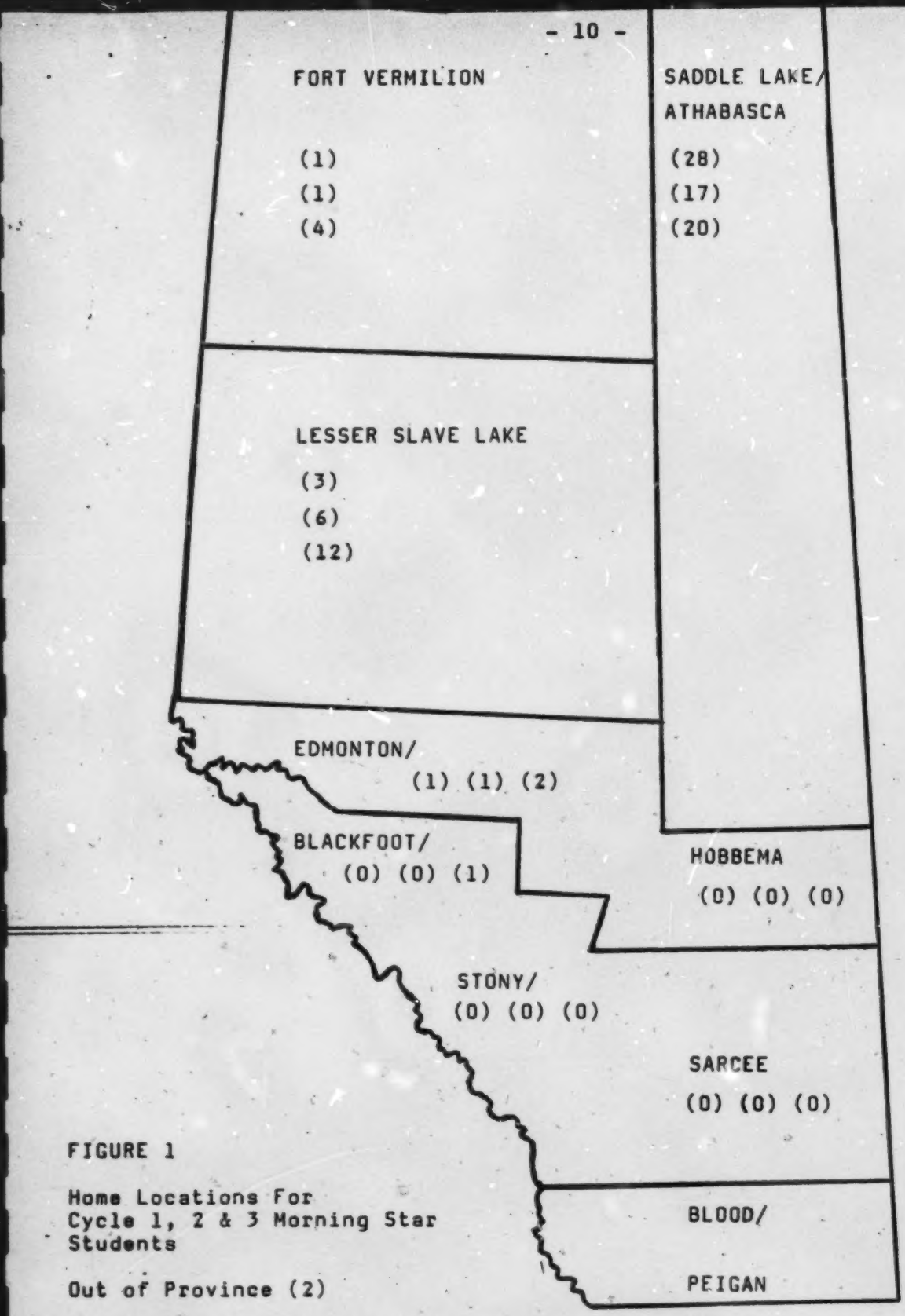

FIGURE 1

Home Locations For
Cycle 1, 2 & 3 Morning Star
Students

Out of Province (2)

Probationary Status

Morning Star is one of many Native teacher education programs which admits students who have not completed the requirements for matriculation. These students would not normally be admissable to a B. Ed. degree program. Interestingly the amount of previous high school training received prior to entering Morning Star has not proven to be a good indicator of student success, however, for cycle two students, those who had not received any high school credits prior to entering the program, had a success rate of less than half that of those who had completed some high school training. Of the seven who had no high school credits, only two qualified for certification. The support services including tutorial services would appear to be sufficient to remediate academic weaknesses for those students who both have already a minimum level of academic background and sufficient motivation to succeed. In addition, there appears to be support for the notion that more than academic qualifications are needed if one is to succeed.

Cultural Component

Most Native teacher education projects have made very deliberate attempts to structure a cultural component into their program. The Morning Star cultural component has

taken several forms including: credit courses, guest speakers, field trips and athletic events. Cycle two students referred to the positive impact the cultural component has had when relating how the program in general had helped them. These included comments such as:

(1) ... the History courses taken helped me learn more about Canadian and American Indians. I also gained a better understanding of Indian culture; and

(2) ... has increased my knowledge of Indian people and my understanding of the problems faced by Indian people. I felt I learned many good things about Indian people.

Despite comments such as the above, the cultural component has been the subject of much discussion and concern over the years. This is one aspect of the program which is still in an evolutionary state. Generally there is agreement that it should exist, the form it should take and the impact it has is not as readily discerned.

Other Findings

Perhaps one of the most disconcerting findings of the studies was that male students have had a success rate of less than half their female counterparts. Far

fewer males have enrolled in the program and less than thirty percent of these have been successful. This compares with a female success rate of approximately sixty-six percent and an overall Morning Star success rate of fifty-six percent. No clear explanations for these different success rates are evident.

One "other" finding related to the employability of graduates. Although the project has not been designed to prepare students for employment other than teaching, the relative ease all but one of those completing the program have had obtaining suitable employment suggests one of two things. Either the screening process which involves an examination of students' prior work record and formal training and which strives to select students who have evidenced perseverance and motivation in addition to certain academic abilities is effective, or the program provides training deemed valuable by others.

CONCLUSIONS

The paper has examined the findings of two follow-up studies of the Morning Star Native teacher education program in relation to the assumptions made and the organization and delivery systems employed in the initial planning of this program. Although the findings are tentative due to the number of students (99) involved and the limited number of programs examined (1) they suggest some

general questions about Native teacher education programs in Canada. They include the following:

(1) Are post-secondary educational opportunities for Natives increasing and if so, to what extent?

(2) Are Native students' aspirations changing in favor of post-secondary education generally and univeristy education specifically?

(3) What impact have Native teacher education programs had on the number of qualified Native teachers teaching in schools in Canada?

(4) Are graduates of Native teacher education programs in Canada providing role models for Native children?

(5) What factors contribute to the acceptance of graduates of Native teacher education programs in Canada by the educational and the Native communities?

(6) Under what circumstances should Native teacher education programs provide certification with less training than is required of other teachers in that province or territory? In other words at what point should this practice be discontinued?

(7) What impact has the field center concept had on the success rate of Native teacher education programs in Canada?

(8) What justification exists for probationary admission to Native teacher education programs in Canada?

a) What indicators of success are there for students admitted to Native teacher education programs in Canada?

(9) What aspects of the cultural component have tended to have funcitonal or dysfunctional outcomes?

(10) Are there significant differences in the rates of success for male and female students enrolled in Native teacher education programs in Canada?

(11) What aspects of the existing Native teacher education programs contributes to the employability of graduates of such programs in fields unrelated to education?

Answers to these questions would assist in providing a greater understanding of the field of Native teacher education and would facilitate a more rational approach to the organization and delivery of such programs.

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